

Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service

POST INCIDENT ANALYSIS

Discovery Channel Headquarters
1 Discovery Place
Silver Spring, MD
F10-0098660

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Post Incident Analysis

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1 Discovery Place Post Incident Analysis

This post incident analysis covers the fire rescue response to the Lone Wolf suicide bomber with hostages' event. Law enforcement actions and lessons learned are outlined in a separate document.

Incident Overview

At 1300 hours on September 1, 2010, initial 9-1-1 calls advised Montgomery County Maryland police dispatchers that a man holding a bomb was shooting a gun in the lobby of the Discovery Building located at 1 Discovery Place, Silver Spring Maryland. At 1307 hours, Montgomery County Police Emergency Services Unit requested fire marshals (FM) to assist with the Emergency Response Team (ERT) callout. Soon there after, police requested an engine company and medic unit for additional support.

At 1313 hours, Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service (MCFRS) Engine 701, Medic 701, and Bomb Unit 700¹ were dispatched to assist the ERT callout.

As fire marshals and fire rescue units began arriving, they were directed to stage with police units. Police reported that a suspect with an Improvised Explosive Devise and Improvised Incendiary Devise strapped to his body had taken three hostages as he entered the lobby of the Discovery Building. Due to the risk of significant damage to the building, and the potential for catastrophic loss of life; fire rescue incident command mobilized equipment and personnel to support a large-scale terrorist event with unknown consequences.

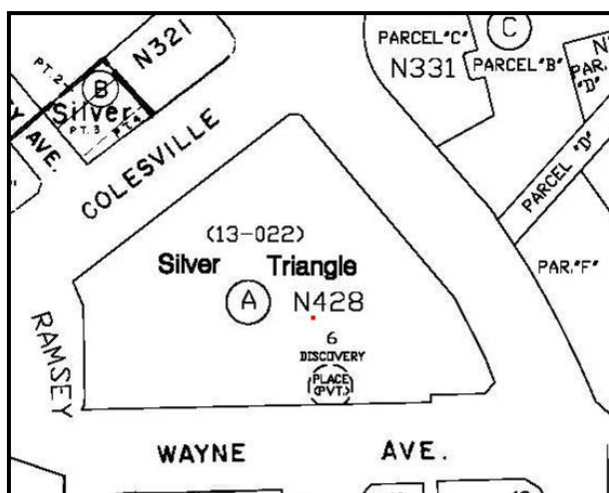
During the course of the event, several fire and EMS task forces, made up of units from Montgomery, Prince George's Counties and the District of Columbia were dispatched to stage strategically around the Discovery Building. Police negotiated with the suspect for several hours, but were unable to negotiate surrender. At 1655 hours the suspect was shot by police following an escape attempt initiated by the hostages. Once the suspect was neutralized, fire rescue took the lead while the Fire and Explosive Investigation Section conducted render safe procedures on the IID/IEDs. Upon completion of fire rescue responsibilities, the incident scene was returned to Montgomery County Police and investigators from various federal authorities.

The weather at the time was hot and sunny, with an air temperature of 93 degrees F, 38% humidity, and clear skies with light winds from the South Southeast at 3.5 miles per hour. No rainfall had been reported within the past several days.

¹ The MCFRS Fire and Explosive Investigations section is an approved Federal Bureau of Investigation bomb squad. The personnel assigned to the section are commonly referred to as fire marshals or bomb squad on both police and fire radio communications.

Structure/Site Layout

Number One Discovery Place is located in downtown Silver Spring in a small block described in legal documents as the Silver Triangle, commonly referred to as the Discovery Building. It is home to the headquarters of Discovery Communications Incorporated, the parent company of the Discovery Channel, Animal Planet, and The Learning Channel. The building was constructed in 2003 and sits on a triangular block bounded on its three sides by Georgia Avenue, Colesville Road, and Wayne Avenue. Discovery Place is located just inside the block as a short circular drive off of Wayne Avenue closer to its intersection with Georgia Avenue.



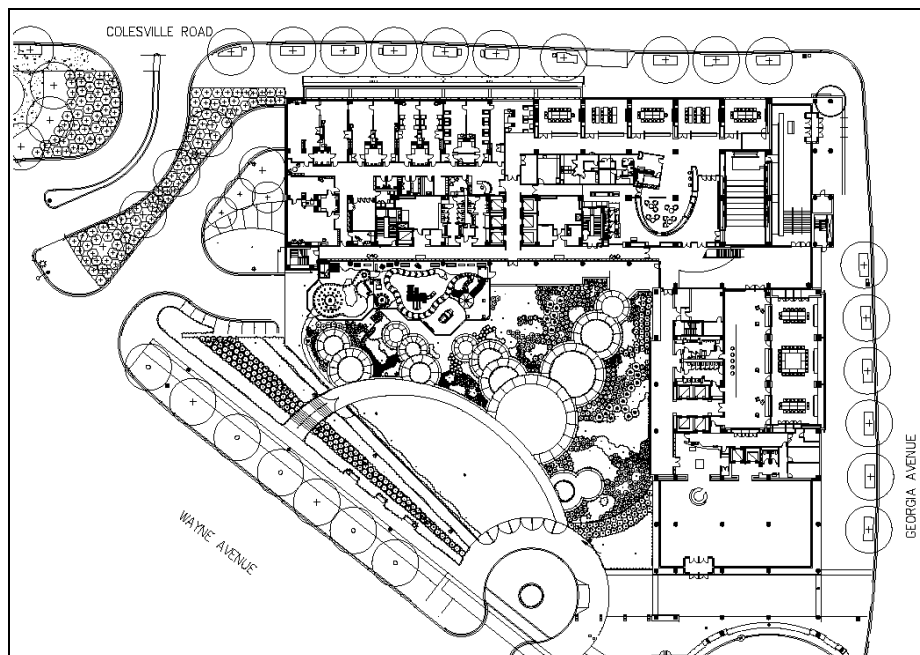
The Discovery Building is the only structure in the Silver Triangle block. The building footprint is two acres, with the remainder of the 4.5 acre Silver Triangle dedicated to open space. The building has 550,000 square feet of office space and 330,000 square feet in the employee parking garage, and accommodates about 1,900 employees. The garage is located under the Colesville wing of the building.

The Discovery Building is an L-shaped structure situated so that the intersecting corner of the L is at the intersection of

Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road and the open or inside section of the L faces Discovery Place. A central atrium that is over 150 feet high with floating stairs and flying balconies extending ten stories connects the two wings of the building. The Colesville Road side of the building is ten stories, while the Georgia Avenue wing is seven stories with a rooftop terrace.

Structurally, the Discovery Building is Class 1 construction with reinforced concrete columns, steel structure and glass curtain panels. The building was constructed with rebar into the cross beams extending 8 feet beyond the code required distance for each column and floor. The rebar reinforcement was designed to decrease the risk of pancake collapse in the event of a possible explosion.

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First floor plan of the Discovery Building, One Discovery Pl.

The green space, located between Wayne Avenue and the inside L of the building, is the Sensory Garden. It is approximately two acres and each circular area showcases plantings designed to stimulate the five senses. The Sensory Garden is enclosed by fencing with several gates on each end of the garden. The small lobby, located at the corner of Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road, has 35 foot high ceilings and is only used by employees or during special events.



View of Side Bravo & Charlie of Building

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Main Lobby as Viewed from Elevator Bank

The main lobby, located at the lower right section of the above picture at the intersection of Georgia Avenue and Wayne Avenue, is approximately 5,000 square feet and is the principal entrance for employees and guests entering the Discovery Building. In addition, it is utilized for exhibits and after-hours entertaining. The video wall contains 16 – 55 inch high definition monitors and was, as of March 2003, the largest Toshiba video wall in North America.

The lobby contains several large displays. These include an audio-kinetic sculpture, a 13-foot high replica of a Tyrannosaurus Rex found in the Black Hills of South Dakota, three American Choppers motorcycles, a Triceratops skull, Bambi Raptor display, and a Woolly Mammoth tusk and tooth display. Finally, there is a display of Australian animals that was placed in the lobby to promote the opening of the Discovery Kid's Place and Crikey Cove; two activity centers located in other areas of the building.

Dispatch Summary

Fire Marshals requested by MCPD	1307	
Call enters pending	1309:49	INV, BU700, EX
Engine and ALS unit requested	1311	
Call dispatched	1313:34	E701 & M701
1 st Unit On-Scene	1345:37	BU700
Canteens dispatched	1414:15	CT705, CT740, HM707
First fire task force dispatched	1433:21	E719, E754, AT719
First EMS task force dispatched	1438:00	A701, M712, M715, RS742B
HazMat response dispatched	1444:23	E720, E725, T725, E728, HM728
Second EMS task force	1512:09	A705, M742B, M742C
Second fire task force	1518:14	E705, T716, T834@15:33 BC704 (@15:31)
Third fire task force	1544:45	E712, T706, BC702
Medical Ambulance Bus	1551:23	MAB726, MSCU726, A742D, M812
Medical Ambulance Bus	1605:23	MAB722, SU722

Communications

Personnel supporting the ERT callout and dealing with the bomb component of the incident used 71-Charlie on their VHF Radios. As additional fire units began arriving, 71-Delta and 71-Echo were added, with 71-Delta being the primary fire talk group. 71-Charlie was restricted to use by the bomb technicians. 71-Golf through 71-Ide were distributed to various groups to be used internally.

The hostage negotiations lasted just under four hours. Communications during this period were securely managed through conference calls, on a need to know basis to ensure information about the unfolding incident was not leaked or overheard by the

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press or surrounding bystanders. Conference calls were set up using the daily command conference call line. The command team also maintained open lines of communications via cell phones with the supervisor at the Emergency Communications Center (ECC), and the fire rescue liaison in the police command post.

Due to the potential for radio controlled IEDs being present, the bomb squad requested the Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) unit from the Fairfax Division of the Virginia State Police (Division Seven). Electronic Counter Measures, a subsection of electronic warfare, are any type of electronic devices designed to confuse radio frequency transmissions in a cone around the transmitting unit in an attempt to deny targeting information to an enemy. In warfare, ECM can be used either offensively or defensively. For example, in the application requested at this event, the ECM would be used to block the reception of radio signals by radio-controlled IEDs. The ECM would also disrupt all public safety radio transmissions as well as cell phones. Fire Rescue command staff briefed all group supervisors and developed a contingency plan for communications in case the ECM device was activated. When the ECM unit arrived, bomb squad personnel obtained all required approvals with the exception of the very last approval to use the ECM unit. The ECM was not utilized as the event was terminated when the hostages attempted to flee and an emergency assault occurred.

Pre-Emergency Planning

Fire Station 1 map # 1-3 outlines the area including One Discovery Place. This map is up to date and accurate to the macro level, and is maintained on the dashboard of all apparatus. It gives a comprehensive overview of the area from Georgia Avenue at Colesville Road down to Georgia Avenue at Eastern Avenue, encompassing a swath of area approximately three blocks wide on either side of Georgia Avenue.

In the beginning of the incident, both fire and police personnel sent runners to Engine 701, the first arriving fire rescue unit for site specific information on the Discovery Building. Engine 701's Map # 3N, drawn on June 24, 2008, provides a good overview of the footprint and block layout of the Discovery Building in the Silver Triangle, as well as positions of adjacent buildings. However, it did not contain more detailed information (e.g., building contacts, floor plans, and building exits) that MCRS typically includes in pre-plans for high risk sites including major commercial or residential complexes. ..



While the response maps on fire apparatus did not contain detailed information, since the event was isolated to one section of the Discovery Building the resources of the building maintenance and security staff were accessible to fire rescue and police staff.

This included access to multiple security rooms from which live feeds of security cameras could be monitored as well as playback of recorded video could be replayed.

The sophistication of the building security and maintenance systems greatly assisted public safety personnel in managing the event.

On Scene Operations

INITIAL ACTIONS

The incident began as a law enforcement response to a shooting in progress. Upon the arrival of the police patrol units, it was determined that the suspect was wearing an IED vest; the Fire and Explosive Investigation section bomb squad was requested. This was quickly followed by the request for an engine and medic unit to support the police Emergency Response Team callout. The fire rescue units were immediately placed in staging. Approximately 45 minutes later, as various fire rescue command staff began arriving on scene, the incident started to escalate.

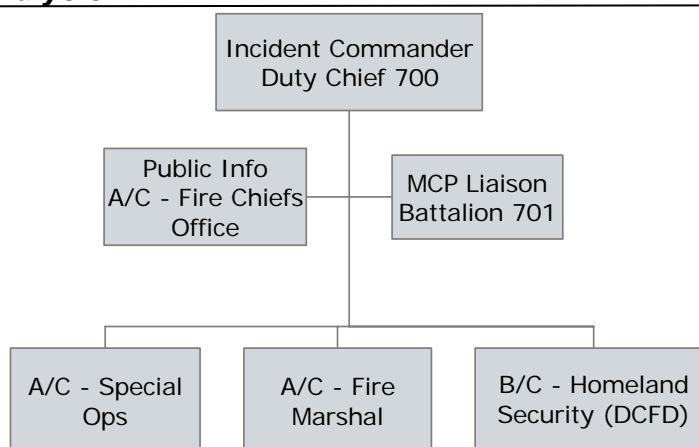
The Duty Chief, Special Operations Chief (SpecOps Chief), and Battalion 701 arrived on-scene within about five minutes of each other at 1400 hours, and began to work on contingency plans for the incident. It was at this point in the event that fire rescue command staff determined the potential scale and magnitude of the event were underestimated, and escalated the fire rescue response.

COMMAND TEAM

Prior to the Duty Chief's arrival, FM51 had established command. The Duty Chief assumed command when he arrived on scene. As additional command staff began arriving, they were assigned roles and responsibilities. The Duty Chief retained Incident Command,² and he was assisted in this role by the SpecOps Chief, the Assistant Chief Fire Marshals Office (FM2), and Battalion Chief Donnelly, the Homeland Security Chief of the District of Columbia Fire/EMS (DCFEMS), The Battalion Chief from Safety and Fire and Explosive Investigations (FM4) was the group supervisor of the bomb group, while the Assistant Chief of the Fire Chief Office filled out the role of Public Information Officer upon his arrival. Fire Rescue and Police developed a joint information center and provided timely updates to the assembled news media.

² During this incident police and fire rescue maintained separate command posts with separate command staff. Each agency had a liaison at the others command post. The reason for this will be outlined in the lessons learned. As the incident transitioned from one of police being lead agency during the hostage negotiation, to fire rescue lead during the render safe process, and finally back to the police during scene documentation and evidence collection the transition of command too was passed.

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Note: See Incident Management Structure on page 15 and Event Organization Chart in Appendix for more chart details.

The night side Duty Chief was recalled to duty to work in conjunction with the rostered Duty Chief Bravo to manage the normal 9-1-1 calls and fire rescue operations.

Battalion 701 was assigned as the liaison between the fire rescue and the police emergency response team command staff. As updates developed Battalion 701 would contact the Special Operations Chief via cell phone. This transitioned to an “open-line” cell call between Battalion 701 and the fire command post. This liaison function continued until after the event transitioned to render safe protocol.

The fire command team initially operated in the bus shelter at the corner of Bonifant Street and Dixon Avenue, then moved to the Battalion 701 command vehicle, and then to Command Post 727 upon its arrival. Command Post 727 was located on Georgia Avenue at Bonifant Street. It was unable to position closer to the police command bus due to congestion on Bonifant Street. Command Post 727 arrived with four personnel from the Fire Rescue Training Academy and all were incorporated into the command team in support roles once operations transitioned to the command post.

Command operated on talk group 71-Delta throughout the event.

INITIAL STAGING

Fire Station 1, three blocks south of the Discovery Building on Georgia Avenue, was initially selected as the general fire rescue staging area. As the scale of the event was better determined the event organization/breakout expanded.

RESPONSE RESOURCE ORGANIZATION

As the command team started to organize the event into manageable parts, the decision was made to request resources in the task force configuration. This was chosen because each task force can be easily managed by one unit officer and they are set resource types in the computer aided dispatch system (CAD). Command Staff strategically located responding fire resources in staging areas several blocks in each direction from the intersection of Colesville Road and Georgia Avenue surrounding the Discovery Center.

South Group

The South Group, located at Bonifant Street just east of Georgia Avenue, consisted of Engine 719, Engine 754, and Tower 719 under the supervision of Chief 701-Bravo. Canteen 705 and All Terrain Vehicle-711 were also assigned to the South Group when they arrived. The South Group was assigned talk group 71-Echo to use within the group if needed.

East Group

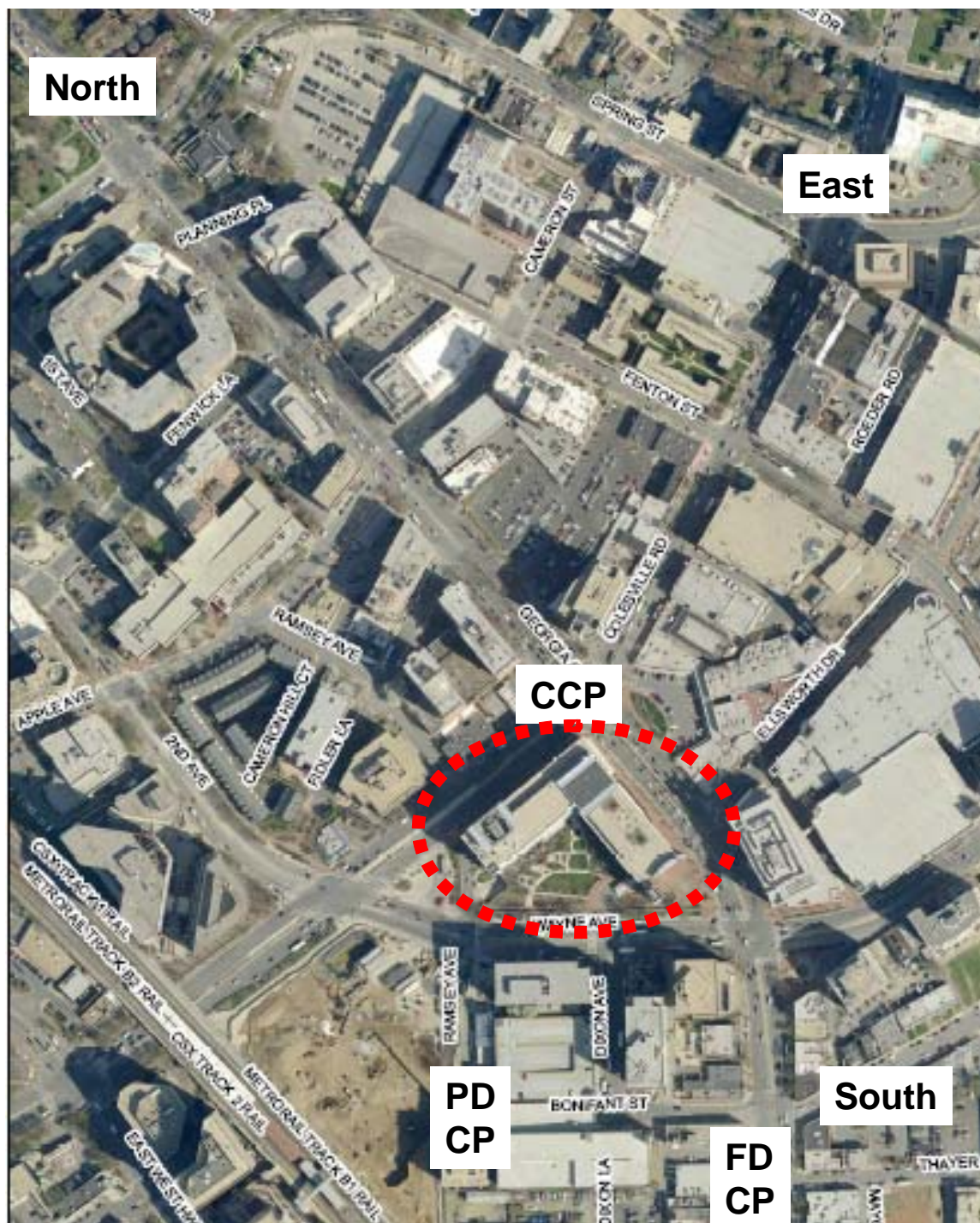
The East Group was initially supervised by the officer on Rescue Squad 742 Bravo and then transitioned to the EMS Battalion Chief, upon his arrival. Units assigned to the East Group consisted of: Rescue Squad 742-Bravo, Medic 712, Medic 715, Ambulance 701, Medical Ambulance Bus 726, and Medical Care Support Unit 726. The South Group was located at Colesville Road and Spring Street.

North Group

The North Group was designated to stage at Georgia Avenue and Spring Street under the supervision of Battalion 704. The fire apparatus assigned to this group included Engine 705, Truck 716, and Truck 834. The EMS units assigned to this group were Medic 742-Bravo, Medic 742-Charlie, Ambulance 702, along with Medical Ambulance Bus 722 and Support Unit 722. Canteen 708 assisted at this staging location. The North Group was assigned talk group 71-Ide to use within the group if needed.

West Group

The West Group, staged at East West Highway and Sixteenth Street, was supervised by Battalion 702. Units assigned to the West Group included Engine 712, Engine 728, HazMat 728, and Truck 706. The West Group was assigned talk group 71-Hotel to use within the group if needed.



Fire Station One

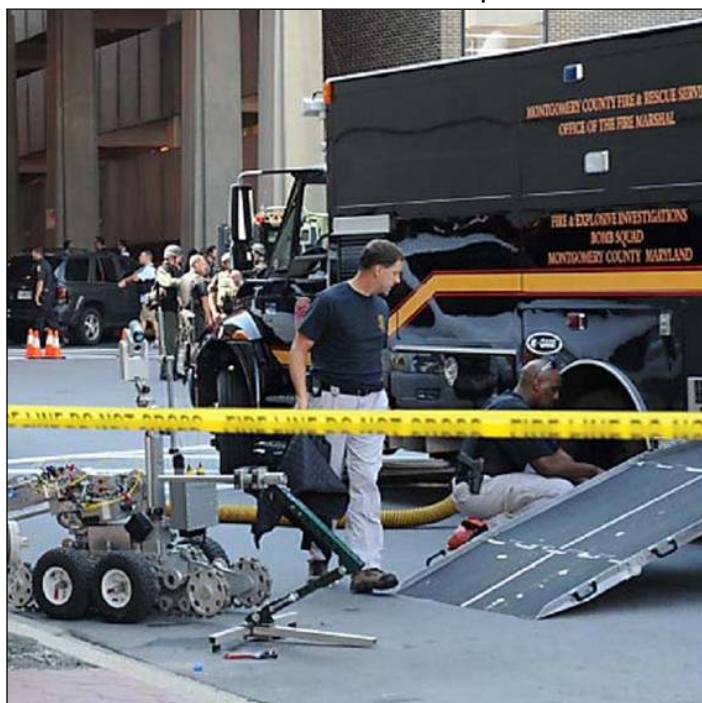
After the directional groups were formed, Fire Station 1 became the staging location for mutual aid units. The DC Fire & EMS North Mass Casualty Task Force, which consisted of Medical Ambulance Bus One, Medical Ambulance Bus Two, Medical Care Support Unit One, and Medical Care Support Unit Two were supervised by EMS 8 and staged at station 1 along with Ambulance 742-Delta

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Bomb Group

The Fire and Explosive Investigation section bomb squad initially responded in conjunction with the police Emergency Response Team (ERT) for the hostage situation with the suspect wearing an IED vest.³ These personnel were assembled into the bomb group with seven bomb technicians in the hot zone. Five of these personnel were assigned to ERT action teams, while two provided observation and intelligence gathering from strategic positions around and outside the lobby. One bomb tech gained access to the building security office and was watching live and taped video from the building lobby.

The bomb squad Battalion Chief integrated into the police command structure to provide actionable instruction regarding the person-borne improvised explosive device (PBIED). This integration was critical to unified command so that contingency plans could be developed.



Bomb Squad Personnel Preparing for Robot Operations

The fire rescue bomb squad was committed to direct support of the police ERT. This created a need for additional bomb squad personnel/teams. Additionally, large robot platforms were requested to support the operation. Mutual aid bomb squads from Prince Georges County Fire Department, Metro Transit Police, United States Capital Police, Virginia State Police and Federal Explosive Partners.

The bomb squad unit was positioned on Bonifant Street where they assembled equipment for render safe operations down range. Engine and Medic 701 were assigned to assist the bomb group personnel with support functions.

Garage Group

As the command team began to develop the directional grouping of resources, a request was made for an EMS unit to be staged in the Bonifant Avenue parking garage, the site of the police command post, to ensure the safety of police responders Initially Medic 701 operated both in the bomb group and the garage group. As

³Personal Borne Improvised Explosive Device (PBIEB) is the technical term for an individual wearing an improvised explosive devise.

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additional resources arrived on scene, Prince George's Medic 812 was added to the garage group. EMS702 was assigned as the garage group supervisor.

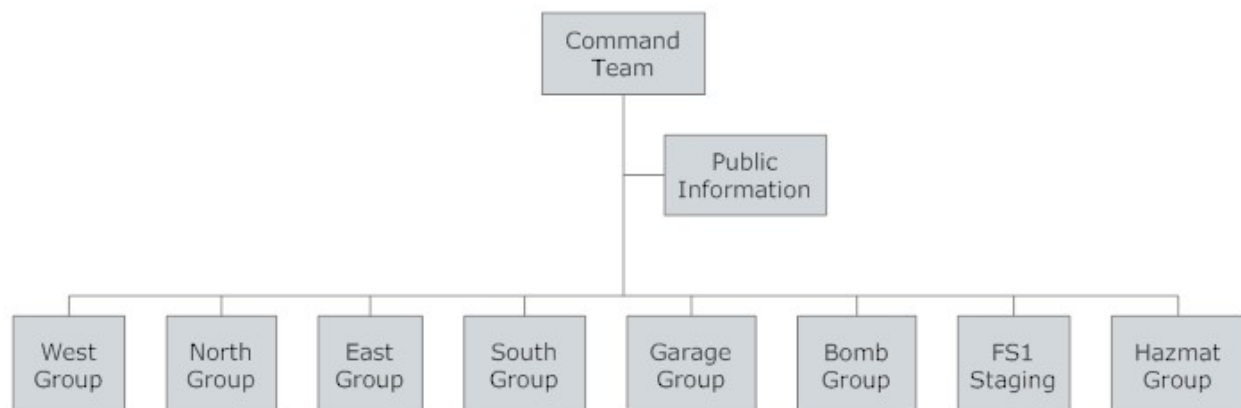
After the three hostages fled the lobby, police detectives requested the garage group personnel assess the hostages. All three were assessed and refused transport.

Hazmat Group

Hazmat 707 was initially requested to support bomb squad operations. As the scope of the event was understood, the hazmat response was upgraded to include all consolidated hazmat stations.

The officer of Hazmat 707 was assigned as the Hazmat Group supervisor. In addition to the bomb squad support role, the Hazmat Group was tasked with developing a decon plan. The Hazmat Group utilized HazMat 707, Support Unit 725, Engine 725, Truck 725, and Engine 720 while developing a decon corridor on Dixon Street near Bonifant. The Hazmat Group utilized talk group 71-Golf for HazMat operations.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



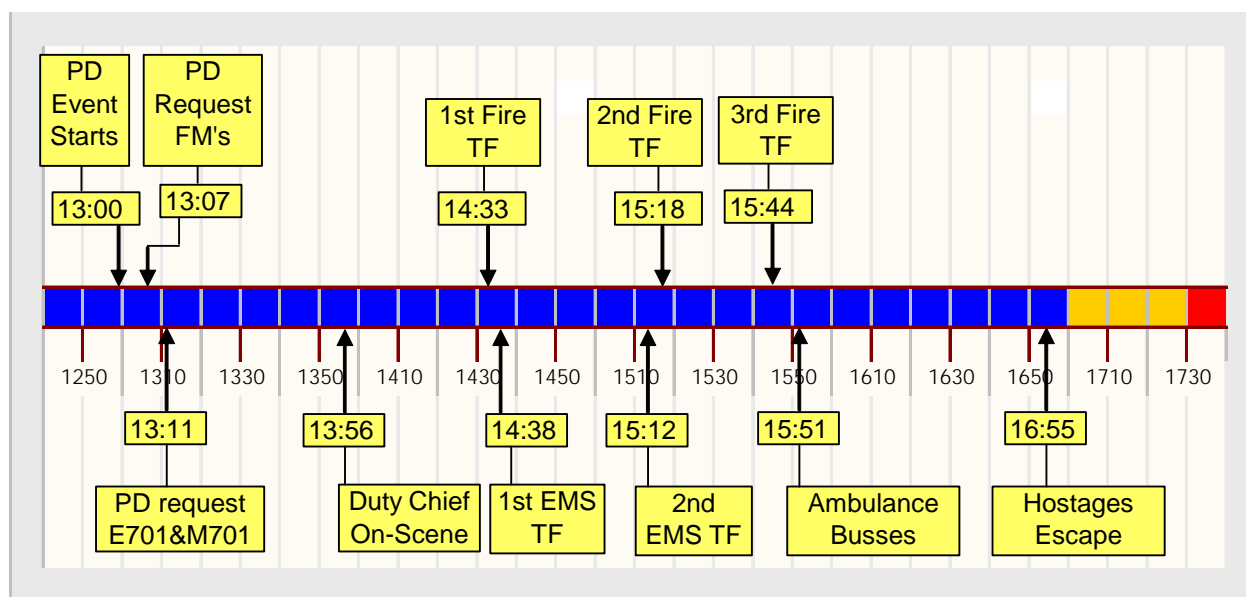
CONTINGENCY PLAN

The command team used cellular phones to coordinate with county police Tactical EMS (TEMS) personnel to discuss strategic deployment of fire and rescue assets. The lobby at the Georgia Avenue and Colesville Road intersection, outside the L corner of the Discovery Building, was designated as the Casualty Collection Point (CCP).

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The command team developed a contingency plan for response to injured personnel being brought to the CCP. The North and South Groups would merge at the CCP and would move injured patients east on Colesville Road to the East Groups location. The East Group would operate the incident triage and treatment area at the Colesville Road and Spring Street intersection.

Had the incident dictated the injured be directed toward the Colesville and Ramsey intersection, the plan would have shifted so that the West Group would move up to Colesville and East West, and operate the triage and treatment area from that location.



Timeline of Significant Events during Initial Four Hours

RENDER SAFE

Render safe plans were developed and evaluated during the hostage siege. Multiple bomb teams and explosive equipment were requested and deployed. Montgomery County bomb squad transitioned from supporting the police tactical role to bomb squad render safe procedures after the suspect was neutralized. Render safe operations were anticipated to take up to twelve hours.

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Picture of Bomb Technician Operating Inside the Discovery Building Lobby During Render Safe Operations.

Bomb squad personnel deployed equipment to evaluate the suspect's IED vest and other unidentified objects/bags in the lobby. This required the use of four remote controlled robotic platforms working in concert to effectively move the device to outside the building for disruption

The final portion of the render safe plan required bomb squad members to operate in bomb suits preparing and setting disrupters. This consisted of multiple bomb technicians from all squads completing specific tasks downrange and inside the lobby area. The render safe operation took nine hours.

SUPPORT FUNCTIONS

In the initial stages of the event, county police requested fire rescue canteen support at the command post. This resulted in the early dispatch of three canteens. Canteen 705 was assigned to the South Group, Canteen 740 was assigned to the police command post, and Canteen 708 was assigned to the North Group.

As delays in dispatching the requested units became more of a hindrance in the implementation of the incident action plan, the command team asked BFC Donnelly (DCFEMS) directly to send the DCFEMS command post and the North Mass Casualty Task Force to Fire Station 1. These units were staged at Fire Station 1.

ACCOUNTABILITY

During the event, Incident Command maintained accountability by group and staging location by using a tactical worksheet. In the hours prior to the incident stabilization, only one incident-wide Personnel Accountability Report (PAR) was completed via radio and face-to-face communications. This accountability report was completed at 16:10 hours while many of the dispatched units were still responding to the scene.

Lessons Learned

Event Magnitude

The fire rescue involvement in this event started as a bomb squad response with an engine and medic unit assigned to support the county police Emergency Response Team call out. The Duty Chief was made aware of this event by a fire marshal on-scene of a previous event. Individual command staff began to arrive on scene in the first hour of the event.

Upon arrival, the command officers on-scene were presented with an extremely complex event that appeared to be a domestic lone-wolf terrorist with multiple improvised explosive devices, hostages, roughly 1,900 occupants in the Discovery Building exposed, and several dozen law enforcement personnel within range of the explosive device detonation area.

During this phase of the event, the Emergency Communications Center (ECC) was unaware of the magnitude of injury/destruction present at the Discovery Building. This situation holds true for the majority of department senior staff.

Recommendation

The central point for situational awareness should start at the 9-1-1 center (ECC). A system that ensures when more than a set number of additional resources are requested for police or fire rescue the incident is elevated and brought to the attention of the Duty Chief via cell phone.

Dispatch Delays

As the event developed, due to the complexity of resource requests, cell phone calls were made to the ECC Fire supervisor (CAD86) requesting additional resources be dispatched. These requests included the support function units, canteens and command post, as well as the fire and ems task forces. As resources were requested, the ECC provided each unit with specific routes of travel and reporting locations. Unfortunately, ECC dispatchers perceived the requests to be low priority. Therefore, the dispatches were delayed and at times other pending events were dispatched before those requested at the Discovery Building.

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The timeframe from request to dispatch ranged from 12 to 18 minutes. After the third or fourth call to ECC, command established an open cell phone call/line with ECC to avoid delays, to have streamline communications, and to underscore the priority of the requests.

Recommendation

The response mode priority of units requested will be determined by the Incident Commander. Units shall only be dispatched routine at the approval of the Incident Commander.

Communications Notification Process

A current practice at the ECC is for the on duty supervisor to notify senior personnel of critical events via a phone call. The ECC supervisor was actively engaged with resource allocation for this event, and other events occurring during this time period. A process was not in place to ensure the notification to senior fire rescue personnel in the event there were simultaneous events requiring ECC supervisor input on resource allocation.

Recommendation

The ECC Administration should create an internal procedure to eliminate the need to individually call senior fire rescue personnel. This procedure would free the supervisor to maintain focus on critical supervisory tasks.

Internal ECC Resource Allocation

During this event, the command team requested one hard-phone-line patch with an ECC dispatcher and two tactical talk-groups with operators. This request hindered the abilities of the ECC to manage other events in the county, and answer other incoming calls for service. The ECC has nine positions available (including the supervisor, four 911 call takers, and four dispatchers; two of which are dedicated to primary dispatch and primary operations.

Recommendation

Command officers should fully understand the staffing and physical resource limitations that are in place at the ECC. During events where unified command has been established, and when there are “command buses” available, tactical talk group operations should be maintained with a telecommunicator on a voice radio talk group.

Fire Rescue must plan for and create contingency plans when the staffing and resource capacity of the ECC has been overwhelmed. This should include the centralization and consolidation of the available ECC qualified field personnel, which would allow for rapid deployment of personnel to the ECC or scene, as tactical talk group operators, when needed.

External ECC Requests

During the event the ECC supervisor received numerous calls from personnel, not responding or on-scene at the Discovery Building, requesting information about the event. The ECC supervisor also received numerous calls from personnel suggesting how to redistribute fire rescue and mutual aid resources around the county to ensure coverage. These calls detracted from the ECC supervisor's availability to manage the ECC.

Recommendations

All personnel, including Chief Officers not directly involved in the event should limit requests made to the ECC supervisor.

Allocation of fire rescue and mutual aid resources to ensure adequate coverage around the county should remain the sole responsibility of the ECC supervisor.

If multiple transfers of resources between stations is needed during a response to a large-scale event, a Chief Officer should be assigned to and report to the ECC to assist the ECC supervisor.

Requests for additional resources from a large-scale event should be directed only through the Incident Commander.

Mobile Data Computer (MDC) Data Overload

As the event developed, MDCs slowed down greatly. During the event it was believed to be related to poor cellular signal strength and/or a specific MDC error. The command team tried to utilize the MDC to obtain event situational awareness and for data/text messaging with ECC. After several attempts to utilize the Battalion 701 and SpecOps Chief MDCs, command abandoned attempts to utilize the MDCs.

After the event, it was learned that at the height of the Discovery Building event that roughly 7,000 MDC data messages were queued to be sent. The system is designed to send a copy of each update/message to every unit/car. The current system utilizes a single pipe/conduit for the relay of all messages; during large-scale events, the volume of messages exceeds the pipeline capacity.

Recommendation

Ensure the availability of additional data pipelines to support MDC data during large scale events.

Develop a priority system for MDC message delivery to prioritize requests from command units' MDCs.

Radio Communications

On large and small-scale events alike, public safety radio transmissions are being monitored and/or recorded by the news media and/or radio enthusiasts. A large number of public safety radio systems, including fire rescues, are “scanned” and then broadcast “live” on the web. These transmissions can be accessed via web enabled smart phones as well as traditional PC’s and laptops. This results in all fire rescue transmissions made on non encrypted radio talk groups being available in real time to the public and media.

Often during event operations, critical communications must be made with sensitive information. This information ranges from hazards/threats present, to the number and severity of victims, and finally to strategic and tactical action plans.

On the current radio system, only a very limited number of radio users have access to encrypted talk groups, and these talk groups are located in administrative/support zones. Several times during the event, communications were made on talk groups 71-Charlie or Delta that contained extremely sensitive information.

To overcome this shortfall during the Discovery event, command conducted several conference calls with command staff and group supervisors. This allowed full duplex/2-way communication with all personnel via a secure means.

Recommendation

Change portable and mobile radio hardware to provide encrypted capabilities to command officers, critical support staff, and fire/rescue primary unit officers.

Change the radio fleet map to provide an encrypted talk group in each primary zone. This talk group should be accessed by command officers and critical support staff.

Cellular Communications

On this event and during past large-scale regional and national emergencies/disasters, the cellular telephone network becomes overloaded. This rapid increase in cellular system utilization drastically restricts the ability of the cellular phone as a critical information gathering and dissemination tool for the emergency responders. Emergency responders are then forced to utilize alternate forms of communication with decreased capacity.

Via the Federal Communications Commission and the National Communications System (NCS) the federal government has established the Wireless Priority Service (WPS). This is a system that provides a priority calling capability that increases the probability of call completion during a national security and emergency preparedness event while using cellular phone assigned to various response entities.

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Over the last two years, fire rescue personnel in the telecommunications office have enrolled the assigned cellular devices for the Battalion Chiefs and Operations Assistant Chiefs.

Additionally the NCS offers the Government Emergency Telecommunications Service (GETS). GETS provides National Security/Emergency Preparedness (NS/EP) personnel a high probability of completion for their phone calls when normal calling methods are unsuccessful. It is designed for periods of severe network congestion or disruption, and works through a series of enhancements to the Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN). GETS is in a constant state of readiness.

Recommendation

All department issued cell phones assigned to certified chief officers and field response support personnel must be registered in the Wireless Priority Service.

All certified chief officers and field response support personnel must be issued GETS numbers. GETS in conjunction with WPS will provide the highest probability of call completion.

Data Logging Cellular Communications

During post incident review, key elements of event chronology and timeline were developed from reviewing radio transmissions and computer aided dispatch records. As highlighted above, due to radio transmission security and message sensitivity, a large portion of critical incident communication and coordination activities often occur via cellular phones.

Cellular phone records document the time a call was placed, to what number, and the call duration, but not the call context. This creates a large void in event history documentation and review.

Recommendation

Research methods for documenting/archiving critical event communications via cellular phone.

Radio Interoperability

Early into the event, the Montgomery County element of the National Capital Region Communications Interoperability Group (CIG) was requested to respond to the scene. This group brings human intelligence and experience, as well as hardware to support and develop event communications. This support includes trained communications unit leaders and technicians, and interoperability solutions.

This group arrived and was able to implement a system that allowed all fire/ems and police agencies to communicate on a common encrypted radio command net. At an

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event of this scale, this functionality is critical to responder safety and a timely and successful event conclusion. In addition to implementing interoperability solutions, the CIG provides radio hardware support, battery exchange and charging solutions.

Recommendations

Continue to support the readiness of the CIG. This support includes training, education, functional exercises, equipment maintenance and technology upgrades.

Develop interoperability solutions that allow fire rescue personnel to talk directly on the regional federal interoperability frequencies.

Accountability / Hot Zone Entry

Early in the event; roughly 1405 hrs, Medic 701 was requested by county police to report to Colesville Avenue and Georgia Avenue for an ALS patient. Upon arrival at the intersection, Medic 701 was met by a county police officer who requested the units Lifepak. This request was on behalf of the tactical medic inside the building. Medic 701 provided the Lifepak and returned to staging.

At 1412, ECC advised Medic 701 that the county police were requesting them at Ramsey Avenue and Georgia Avenue. Because this intersection does not exist and Medic 701 questioned the location. They were directed to switch back to 7-Bravo to determine more information by ECC.

Medic 701 learned that they were being asked to report to the Colesville Avenue and Georgia Avenue intersection again. Upon arrival, Medic 701 was met by a police officer who brought them inside the lobby located at the corner of Collesville Road and Georgia Avenue. Once in the lobby, county police personnel asked Medic 701 to assemble their ALS equipment and cot and return to the lobby.

Since they had previously provided their Lifepak to county police, Medic 701 needed to obtain a defibrillator/monitor. About the same time, a tactical medic asked Medic 701 if the EMS duty officer was on-scene. Medic 701 raised EMS702 on 71-Charlie and requested he join them in the quadrant Delta lobby to supply a Lifepak.

Shortly thereafter; at roughly 1430 hours, Medic 701 called Engine 701's officer via cell phone to notify him that they were inside the quadrant Delta lobby with county police. Engine 701's officer approached command and informed them of Medic 701's location. Command immediately instructed Medic 701 and EMS702 to exit the building and to return to staging.

Recommendations

The assignment of fire rescue resources into a law enforcement situation/scene must be at the direction of the Incident Commander. This assignment must be made utilizing threat/hazard information provided by the police command staff.

1 Discovery Place

Post Incident Analysis

Train all personnel in the tenants of the Joint Police/Fire Action Guide for Active Shooter Response. Consider incorporating a future In-Service training time slot.

Decontamination

As the incident developed, the officer of Hazmat 707 was tasked with both bomb squad support and development of a decontamination (decon) area. The decon area was developed on Dixon Avenue between Wayne Avenue and Bonifant Street. This location was located between the police command post/staging area and the building circle lobby (event location).

As the hostages escaped the building, they were brought up Dixon Avenue and then assessed by EMS crews and detectives. This decon site was limited by the severe congestion of emergency response vehicles on Bonifant Street. Incident Command directed that decon be prepared for the ~ 1,900 workers inside the building. Unfortunately, the location on Dixon Avenue was not adequate to support gross/mass decon of a large number of victims.

Recommendations

As is common on hazmat events, consideration should be made to establish separate decon areas for the public and for responders.

The Dixon Avenue location would have worked well for fire rescue/law enforcement decon. A mass/gross decon capability should have been established on Colesville Road between Fenton Street and Spring Street.

Bomb Squad Integration - Internal

This event involved the integrated response of the county police tactical team and the fire rescue bomb squad. This integration included bomb technicians imbedded with tactical team elements. Via training this integration had been determined to provide the most rapid bomb technician support of the tactical officers.

This integrated relationship was rejuvenated roughly one year prior to this event and was a direct lesson learned from senior fire department personnel participation in a course which takes responders on an inside tour of terrorism preparation/response in Israel.

On this event, the integrated bomb technicians were able to obtain first hand intelligence and observation of the threat present and provide immediate threat identification and actionable guidance to tactical team leaders.

1 Discovery Place Post Incident Analysis

Recommendations

Continue to support the joint operations of county police and fire rescue units through coordination on preparedness, training, planned events, and emergent events.

Obtain the necessary equipment and training to continue joint agency operations and personnel readiness.

Bomb Squad Integration - External

As the event developed, bomb squad personnel determined the need for additional explosive ordinance disposal personnel and equipment. In response to this need calls were made for assistance from; Prince Georges County Fire Department, Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Police, and United States Capital Police Department.

These teams are all are members of the National Capital Region Bomb Squad Working Group whose purpose is to build and enhance the regional bomb squads' capabilities. The preparations of the working group allowed for these four teams to operate simultaneously on this event.

Recommendations

Continue to support agency and personnel involvement in regional committees.

Continue to build interactions of Metropolitan Washington Council of Government Fire Chiefs Sub-committees.

Command Posts

As the event developed, the police field command unit arrived and was positioned on Bonifant at Ramsey. This location was at the west edge of the Bonifant parking garage underpass and co-located with the police staging location. This location became very congested and access became impossible.

The fire command unit arrived at roughly 1415 hours and positioned at Georgia Avenue and Bonifant Street. At that time, it was impractical for the fire command unit to access down Bonifant toward Ramsey to co-locate with the police due to the congestion of emergency vehicles in the area.

Both the police and fire command units were built prior to 2005, just before the broad application of slide outs in mobile command units. Both units have limited large group gathering space and thus can not accommodate a large unified command operation. Each unit is marginally adequate to support its primary agency operations and does not provide space for support public safety agencies and/or property representatives.

1 Discovery Place

Post Incident Analysis

Recommendations

Develop specifications for new mobile command post units that include slide outs for expanded work space.

Develop and implement operational practices that provide parking/operating space for both command units. This would allow for the units to be co-located and adjacent. This would enhance the function of unified command.

Develop operational practices that support public safety personnel utilizing fixed buildings/areas as command posts on large scale events. Acquiring rooms/areas in a building near the incident site will allow for a larger unified command operation.

Tactical EMS

During the past two years, fire rescue, police command, and tactical staff have been developing response plans to major law enforcement events as well as integrations at large planned mass gatherings. This interaction has developed strong working relationships at multiple levels between the organizations. One such integration is with the police tactical EMS (TEMS), frequently referred to as SWAT medics, and fire rescue.

The police TEMS program consists of a cadre of specially trained officers that integrate during tactical operations. On this event early coordination occurred between the TEMS personnel and fire rescue command staff and a casualty collection point was identified.

This allowed TEMS personnel to concentrate on tactical operations inside the hot zone while fire rescue developed contingency plans to treat large numbers of patients if the need arose. Part of this coordination involves communication, both verbal face to face and via portable radio. Police TEMS personnel were monitoring 71-Charlie for fire rescue operations. As the event developed this talk group was dedicated to bomb group operations and 71-Delta was used for primary fire rescue operations. The police TEMS personnel did not know about the switch to 71-Delta.

Recommendations

Fire Rescue and Police must continue to develop integrated operations of the police tactical EMS (TEMS) personnel. This integration should include reviews of TEMS capabilities, fire rescue capabilities and joint training.

All personnel monitoring/operating on event talk groups must be notified when talk group changes are made. After switching talk groups a personnel accountability report must be taken.

Command Staff

Since this incident was initially classified as a police event, fire/rescue resources other than FEI/bomb squad assets were added as the incident escalated. The protocol for initially classifying the incident resulted in dispatch and arrival of fire command staff being delayed. In conjunction with the direction provided by ECC for all units to respond to the scene routine, the secondary delays with dispatch resulted in a shortage of command staff. The magnitude of the incident and the complexity of the situation demanded additional command officers in order to build out the Incident Management System (IMS). Some command staff self-deployed to the scene rather than being prepared to accept and fill a tactical assignment from the ECC.

This situation severely hampered the command team's ability to effectively expand the Incident Command System and to fill key vacancies in the command chart. Several of the command officers on scene contacted subordinate administrative/command staff within their divisions/sections and instructed them to return to duty and to provide county-wide coverage.

Recommendations

All fire-rescue certified chief officers must be prepared to assume a tactical assignment upon arriving at the scene of any incident.

A policy/procedure needs to be created that dictates the actions of off duty and/or staff chiefs during an escalating major event, similar to the Threat Level Red procedure used for escalation in the Homeland Security Advisory System threat level. In addition, the Police Chief and Fire Chief need to engage the Director of the Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security to establish clear guidelines for a partial or full activation of the situation room and Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Key staff will need to be assigned there in the future.

Summary

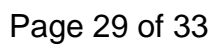
All personnel that responded to this event were challenged with a very complex and dynamic event. The potential for a large mass casualty event, explosion with weapons of mass destruction agent, and/or the unknown were very strong possibilities. This event has been determined by the Federal Bureau of Investigations as the first event in the United States of a “Lone Wolf” suicide bomber with hostages.

The coordinated police and fire efforts resulted in the suspect being the only casualty. The level of inter-agency interaction at multiple levels was critical in the successful management of this event.

All fire rescue personnel must take the opportunity to learn from this report and to utilize these items to improve their actions during their next response. It is not if another event like this “Lone Wolf” Suicide bomber will occur but when. We all must be prepared.

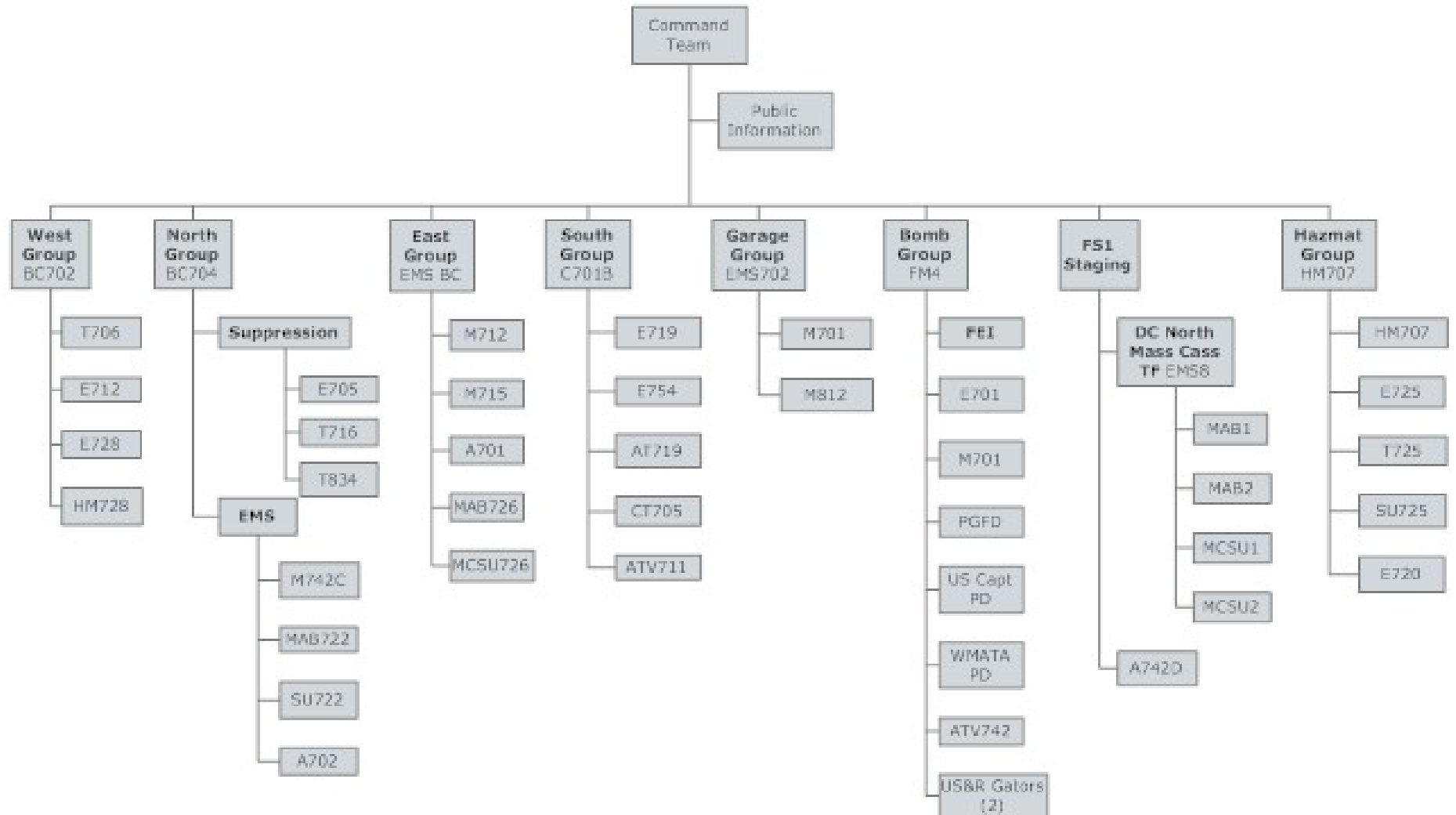
“More people would learn from their mistakes if they weren’t so busy denying them”

Harold J. Smith

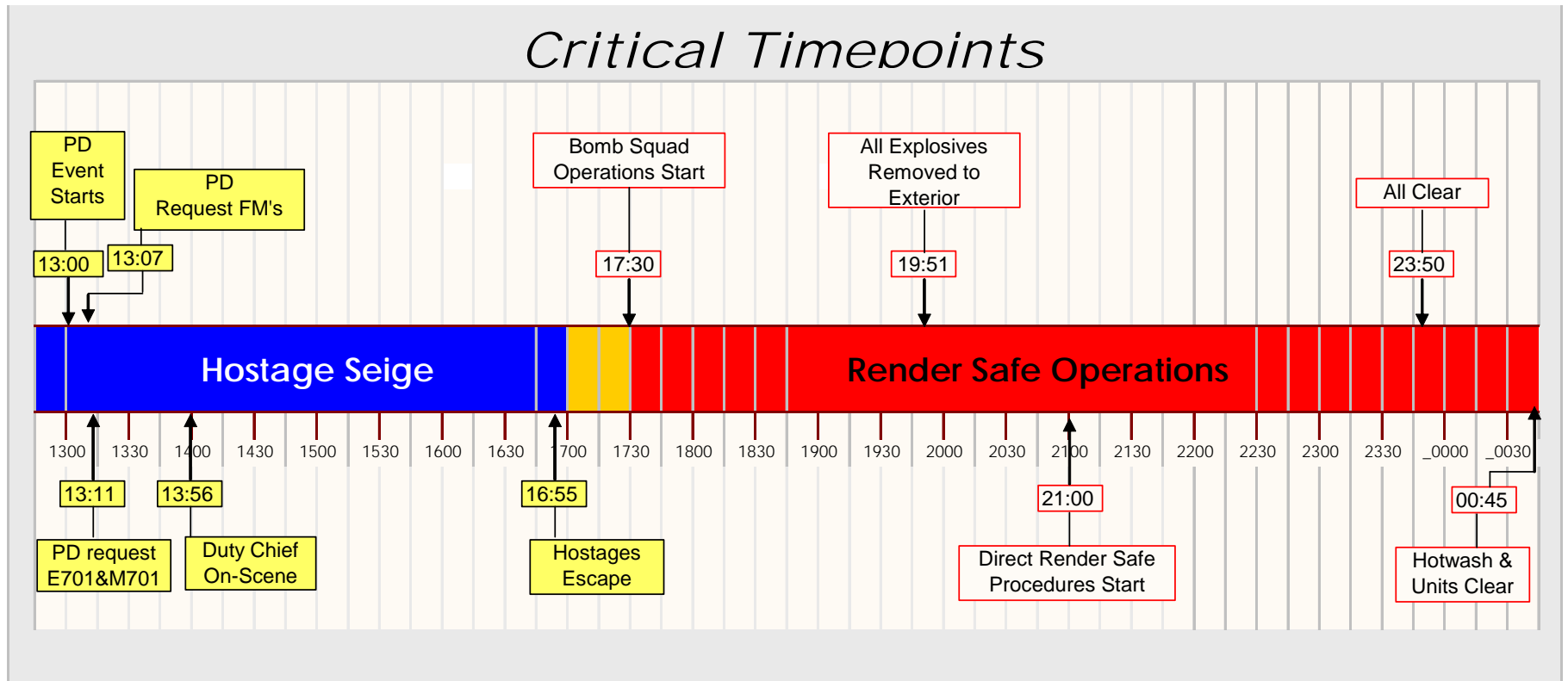




EVENT ORGANIZATION CHART



EVENT TIMELINE



Hostage Seige

